

## LISTING OF THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for identifying a requested level of service for a transaction, comprising:  
  
    non-transitory computer readable storage media; and  
  
    computer readable program code stored in said storage media, comprising:
  - a) program code for prompting a user to select a requested level of service for said transaction;
  - b) program code for assigning said requested level of service to said transaction;
  - c) program code for selecting a backup level of service; and
  - d) program code for assigning said backup level of service to said transaction when said requested level of service is unavailable, wherein said transaction is directed to a network device that is best able to provide said requested level of service for processing said transaction, wherein said best able to provide is determined by program code of a load balancer as to what is a nearest level of service to said requested level of service.
2. (Original) An apparatus, as in claim 1, wherein said transaction is a packetized signal comprising at least a data packet, and wherein a service tag is associated with said data packet by said program code for assigning said requested level of service, said service tag including said requested level of service.
3. (Cancelled)

4. (Original) An apparatus, as in claim 1, wherein said requested level of service is a predefined service category.

5. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for identifying a requested level of service for a transaction, comprising:

non-transitory computer readable storage media; and

computer readable program code stored in said storage media, comprising:

a) program code for selecting said requested level of service for said transaction,

said requested level of service being based on a user identification; [[and]]

b) program code for assigning said requested level of service to said transaction, wherein said transaction is directed to a network device that is best able to provide said requested level of service for processing said transaction, wherein said best able to provide is determined by program code of a load balancer as to what is a nearest level of service to said requested level of service.

6.-8. (Cancelled)

9. (Previously Presented) A method for requesting a level of service for a transaction on a network, comprising:

selecting said requested level of service for said transaction via a user interface; and

assigning said requested level of service to said transaction;

selecting a backup level of service; and

assigning said backup level of service to said transaction when said requested level of service is unavailable, wherein said transaction is directed to a network device that is best able to

provide said requested level of service for processing said transaction, wherein said best able to provide is determined by program code of a load balancer as to what is a nearest level of service to said requested level of service.

10.-13. (Cancelled)

14. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for routing a transaction over a network based on a requested level of service associated with said transaction, comprising:

a number of non-transitory computer readable storage media; and

computer readable program code stored in said number of storage media, comprising:

- a) program code for selecting said requested level of service for said transaction;
- b) program code for assigning a service tag to said transaction, said service tag including said requested level of service, and said program code assigning parts of said service tag at more than one point on said network;
- c) program code for reading said requested level of service from said service tag;
- d) program code for directing said transaction over said network based on said requested level of service read from said service tag;
- e) program code for selecting a backup level of service; and
- f) program code for assigning said backup level of service to said transaction;

wherein said transaction is directed to a network device that is best able to provide said requested level of service for processing said transaction, wherein said best able to provide is determined by program code of a load balance as to what is a nearest level of service to said requested level of service.

15. (Original) An apparatus, as in claim 14, wherein said transaction is directed over said network to a device best providing said requested level of service.

16. (Cancelled)

17. (Original) An apparatus, as in claim 14, wherein said service tag is read by program code at more than one point on said network.

18. (Original) An apparatus, as in claim 14, further comprising program code for changing said requested level of service included on said service tag.

19. (Cancelled)

20. (Cancelled)